

Pictures of English Social Conditions in Country and City.

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T IS more than

The daughter of a younger son of an old country family, Marcella is kept at school while her parents travel abroad. Then on leaving school she falls in with a group of socialists and gains opinions as to social and philanthropic questions on which she is decidedly in the wrong. To quote:

"At any rate, when the moment came for her to leave. Miss Pemberton her mother wrote from abroad that, as Marcella had of late shown decided aptitude both for music and painting, it would be well that she should cultivate both gifts for awhile more seriously than would be possible at home. Mrs. Boyce had made inquiries and was quite willing that her daughter should go for a time to a lady whose

MRS. TUMM


address she enclosed and to whom she herself had written—a lady who received girl students working at the South Kensington art classes.

"So began an experience as novel as it was strenuous. Marcella soon developed all the airs of independence and the jargon of two worlds. Working with consummate energy and ambition she pushed her gifts so far as to become at least a very intelligent, eager and confident critic of the art of other people, which is much. But though art stirred and trained her, gave her new horizons and new standards, it was not in art that she found ultimately the chief excitement and motive-power of her new life—not in art, but in the birth of social and philanthropic ardor, the sense of a hitherto unsuspected social power.

"One of her socialist and fellow students had two brothers in London, both at work at South Kensington, and living not far from their sister. The three were orphans. They sprang from a nervous, artistic stock, and Marcella had never before come near anyone capable of crowding so much living into the twenty-four hours. The two brothers, both of them skillful and artistic designers in different ways, and here at work all day, were members of a rising socialist society, and spent their evenings almost entirely on various forms of social effort and socialist propaganda. They seemed to Marcella's young eyes absolutely sincere and quite unworried. They lived as workmen; and both the luxuries and the charities of the rich were equally odious to them. That there could be any 'right' in private property or private wealth had become incredible to them; their minds were full of lurid images or resentments against the existing state of civilization; and though one was humorous and handsome, the other, short, sickly and pedantic, neither could discuss the socialist ideal without passion, nor hear it attacked without anger. And to milder measure their sister, who possessed more artistic gift than either of them, was like unto them.

But Marcella's father unexpectedly succeeded to the family estate; and she finds herself, with her newly-formed

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rected. Thus she becomes engaged to the heir of a noble house, and it is the course of this engagement, the estrangement and final reconciliation which make up the story of the book. Marcella does not abandon her theories, and it is the refusal of her lover to interfere with the sentence of a poacher who has murdered one of his gamekeepers, and in whom Marcella is interested, which impels her to break her engagement. The incident leading up to the trial and conviction of the poacher are powerfully depicted, and the squalor of English village life and the evils of the English game preserving system are described in detail.

Marcella passes the night before execution with the wife and dying child of the condemned poacher. This is one of the most dramatic passages in the book.

From time to time Marcella probably slipped in her chair. Or else it was the perpetual rush of images and sensations through the mind that hastened the hours. Once when the first streaks of the March dawn were showing through the curtains Minta Huron sprang up with a loud cry:

"Oh, my God! Jim, Jim! Oh, no!—take that off. Oh, please, sir, please. Oh, for God's sake, sir!"

"Agony struggled with sleep. Marcella, shuddering, held and soothed her, and then, as she slept, or rather the drug in her veins, triumphed again. For another hour or two she lay restlessly tossing from side to side, but unconscious.

"Wildly hardly moved all night. Again and again Marcella held beetles or milk to his mouth, and tried to rouse him to take it, but she could make no impression on the passive lips, the sleeping serenity of the brow never changed.

"At last, with a start, Marcella looked round and saw that the morning was fully there. A cold light was streaming through the curtains, the fire was still glowing; but her limbs were stiff and chilled under her shawl. She sprang up, horror descending on her. Her shaking fingers could hardly draw out the watch in her belt.

"Ten minutes to eight!"

"For the first time the girl felt nerve and resolution fail her. She looked at Mrs. Burd and wrung her hands. The mother was muttering and moving, but not yet fully awake; and Willie lay as before. Hardly knowing what she was doing, she drew the curtains back, as though inspiration might come with the light. The rain clouds trailed across the common; water dripped heavily from the thatch of the cottage; and a few birds twittered from some bedraggled larches at the edge of the common. Far away, beyond and beneath those woods to the right, Widrigton lay on the plain, with that high-walled stone building at its edge. She saw everything as it now must be happening as plainly as though she was bodily present there—the last meal—the pinioning—the chaplain."

"Goaded by the passing seconds she turned back at last to wake that poor sleeper behind her. But something diverted her. With a start she saw that Willie's eyes were open.

"'Willie,' she said, running to him, 'how are you, dear? Shall I lift your head a little?'"

"He did not answer, though she thought he tried, and she was struck by the blindness under the eyes and nose. Hurriedly she felt his tiny feet. They were quite cold.

"'Mrs. Burd!' she cried, rousing her in haste; 'dear Mrs. Burd, come and see Willie!'"

"The mother sprang up bewildered, and, hurrying across the room, threw herself upon him.

"'Willie, what is it ails you, dear? Tell mother. Is it your feet are so cold? But we'll rub them—we'll get you warm soon. And here's something to take you better.' Marcella handed her some brandy. 'Drink it, dear; drink it, sweetheart!' Her voice grew shrill.

"'He can't,' said Marcella. 'Do not let us plague him; it is the end. Dr. Clarke said it would come in the morning.'"

"They hung over him, forgetting everything but him for the moment—the only moment in his little life he came first even with his mother.

"There was a slight movement of the hands," she wants his animals," said Marcella, the tears pouring down her cheeks. She lifted them and put them on his breast, laying the cold fingers over them.

"Then he tried to speak.

"'Daddy!' he whispered, looking up fully at his mother; 'take 'em to daddy!'"

"She fell on her knees beside him with a shriek, hiding her face, and shaking from head to foot. Marcella alone saw the slight, mysterious smile, the casual staking of the lids, the shadow of a departing life that ran through the limbs.

"A heavy sound swung through the

Hurd held up her head and listened. The church clock tolled eight. She knelt there, struck motionless by terror—by recollection.

"Oh! Jim!" she said, under her breath—"my Jim."

Marcella next interests herself in London hospital work, and becomes a charity nurse. The scene described in the following quotation is her first meeting with her former lover, Aldous Barnum.

"'It's a fight!' said Peabody, as the crowd came within them. 'Listen!'"

"'Shrieks—the most ghastly and piercing note, rang through the air. The men and women who rushed past the two strangers—hustling them, yet too excited to notice them—were all

making for a house some ten or twelve yards in front of them, to their left. Aldous had turned white.

"'It is a woman!' he said, after an instant's listening, 'and it sounds like murder. You go back for that policeman!'"

"And without another word he threw himself on the crowd, forcing his way through the throng of arms and shoulders which in years gone by had done good service for the Trinity eight. Drink-sodden men and screaming women gave way before him. He found himself at the door of the house, hammering upon it with two or three other men who were there before him. The noise from within was appalling—cries, groans, uproar, all the sounds of a deadly struggle proceeding apparently on the second floor of the house. Then came a pause—then the sound of voices different in quality and accent from any that had gone before, crying piteously and as though in exhaustion—'Help!'"

"Almost at the same moment the door which Aldous and his companions were trying to force was burst open from within, and three men seemed to be shot out from the dark passage inside—two wrestling with the third, a wild beast in human shape, maddened apparently with drink, and splashed with blood.

"'It's done for her!' shouted one of the captors; 'an' for the sister, too!'"

"The sister!" shrieked a woman behind Aldous—'it's the puss he means!'"

"I nor her go in when I wor at my window half an hour ago. Oh! yer blackguard, you!"—and she would have fallen upon the wretch in a frenzy, had not the bystanders caught hold of her.

"Stand back!" cried a policeman. Three of them had come out at Percy's call. The man was instantly secured, and the crowd pushed back.

"Aldrous was already upstairs."

"Which room?" he asked of a group of women crying and covering on the first landing—for all sounds from above had ceased.

"Third floor front," cried one of them. "All of us begged and implored, that young person, sir, not to go near him! Didn't we, Betsy?—didn't we, Doll?"

"Aldous ran up."

"On the third floor the door of the front room was open. A woman lay on the ground, apparently beaten to death."

"By her side, torn, disheveled and grasping, knelt Marcella Boyce. Two or three other women were standing by in helpless terror and curiosity. Marcella was bending over the bleeding victim before her. Her own left arm hung as though disabled by her side; but with the right hand she was doing her best to staunch some of the bleeding from the head. Her bag stood open beside her, and one of the women nearest her was handing her what she asked for. The sight stamped itself in lines of horror on Raeburn's heart."

"In such an exaltation of nerve she could be surprised at nothing. When she saw Raeburn enter the room she did not even start.

"'I think,' she said, as he stooped down to her—speaking with pauses, as though to get her breath—'he has—killed her. But there is a chance. And a police there—and a stretcher!'

"Two constables entered, as she spoke, and the first of them instantly sent his companion back for a stretcher. Then noticing Marcella's nursing dress and cloak, he came up to her respectfully.

"'Did you see it, miss?'

"'I—I tried to separate them,' she replied, still speaking with the same diffidence, while she silently motioned to Aldous, who was on the opposite side of the unconscious and apparently dying woman, to help her with the bandage she was applying. 'But he was—such a great—powerful brute.'

"Aldous, hating the clumsiness of this man's fingers, knelt down and tried to help her. Her trembling hand, touched, mingled with his.

"'Isn't your arm hurt?' said Aldous, pointing to it.

"'It's not broken—it's wrenched: I can't use it. There—that's all we can do—I'll take gets—to hospital.'

"Then she stood up, pale and staggered, and asked the policeman if he could put on a bandage. The man had got his ambulance certificate and was proud to say that he could. She took a roll out of her bag, and quietly pointed to her arm. He did his best, not without skill, and the deep line of pain furrowing her brow relaxed a little. Then she sank down on the floor again beside her patient, gazing at the woman's marred face—incredibly patient in its deep unconsciousness—at the gnarled and blood-stained hands, with their wedding ring—at the thinning of corn gray hair—with tears that ran down her cheeks, her cheeks in a passion of anguished pity, which touched a chord of memory in Raeburn's mind. He had seen her look so once before—beside Minta Hurd, on the day of Hurd's capture."


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A Heavy Weight.
Starboarder—How is Mr. Weeks, this morning, Mrs. Skinner?
Mrs. Skinner—I took him up a cup of tea and a piece of bread, and he was just able to raise the bread to his lips.
Starboarder (pleased at report)—Oh, he'll pull through all right if he had strength enough to do that!—Puck.

NOT GOOD FISHING GROUNDS.



Miss Juggers (fishing for a compliment)—They say plain girls are always religious. Now, I'm not at all religious.

Mr. Footit (gallantly)—Yes, but she's